

The Christmas Reindeer



A.C.
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Thornton W. Burgess

The Christmas Reindeer

by
Thornton W. Burgess

Illustrated by
Rhoda Chase

Where does Santa Claus get his reindeer? Children in America have seen them in zoos, and some, last year, were lucky enough to have a ride with Santa's own team. They asked so many questions that it was evident there must be a children's book about those deer. We have found something better—a new Christmas story. It is the kind of book, part true and part make-believe, that children over six will enjoy. Whether they believe it or not, they will envy the life of the Eskimo boy and girl who knew these deer in Alaska. They will be thrilled when the sister finds the real Kringle Valley and discovers Santa Claus, a person she had never heard of before. It was her pet reindeer, Whitefoot, who took her there, and it was Speedfoot, one of her father's prize deer, who had the good fortune to be chosen by Santa for his team. That is how the story begins. When you read on, you will know much more about reindeer and Santa Claus, and a great deal more about Christmas.

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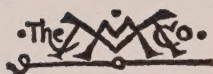
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THE CHRISTMAS REINDEER

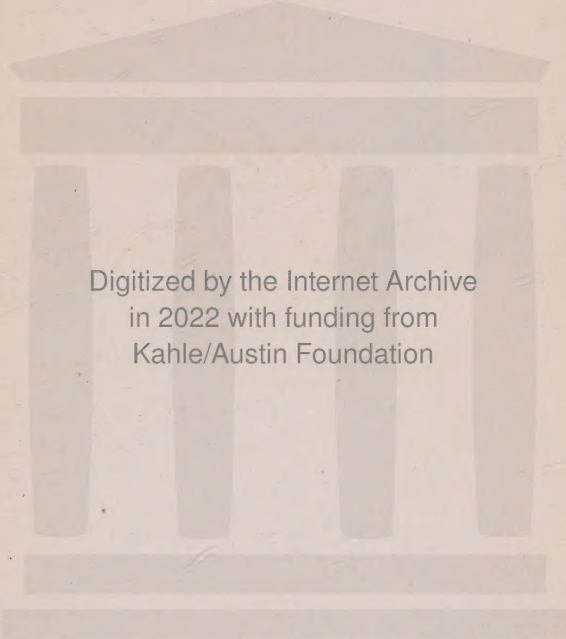




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Whitefoot goes astray

THE CHRISTMAS REINDEER

BY
THORNTON W. BURGESS

ILLUSTRATED BY
RHODA CHASE

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DEDICATION

To the beautiful faith of childhood, the perpetuation of a charming fable, and to a world made better by the Christmas spirit, this little volume is dedicated.

THE AUTHOR

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CHAPTER I

TUKTU AND AKLAK

TUKTU was a little Eskimo girl. Tuktu means caribou. She had been given this name, because only a few days before her birth, a relative named Tuktu had died; and as is the custom, this name had been given to the baby. She was well named, for caribou were to have much to do with her life. On the very day that she was born, Kutok, her father, had killed a caribou when food was greatly needed. That year, for some unknown reason, caribou had moved from their usual feeding grounds, and Kutok and his family had had to depend almost wholly on seal and polar bear, and these had been none too plentiful. So this caribou had brought great joy to the home of Kutok. In the days following, he found the caribou back in their old feeding grounds. Later, Kutok was to become a herder of reindeer, and the rein-

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deer, you know, are first cousins of the caribou. So it was that Tuktu was well named.

Aklak, her brother, bore the name of the great Brown Bear. Aklak was two years older than Tuktu and gave promise of being like his father—a mighty hunter. Already he had killed his seal and none knew better than he how to snare the ptarmigan. In the summer he and Tuktu gathered eggs when the waterfowl came north in untold thousands for the nesting. Whatever Aklak did, Tuktu tried to do.

While the children were still small, their father had become a herder of reindeer, and the little folk spent much of their time with the deer. They helped herd them. They did their part at the annual round-up. In the spring they hunted for stray calves that had lost their mothers. Both learned to drive deer to a sled.

During the long winter nights, the herders often gathered in Kutok's house, and there they told stories while the children listened. There were stories of hunting, stories of adventure, stories of many strange things. But the story that Tuktu and Aklak liked the best

TUKTU AND AKLAK

of all was that of the chosen deer of the Valley of the Good Spirit. This was especially true of Tuktu. She used to dream of that wonderful valley. And whenever she saw the Northern Lights, the Aurora, shooting up high overhead, she would wonder what would happen to any one who might stray into that valley, for it was said that it was from this valley that those lights came.

At last there came a time when she and Aklak actually were to live for a week or two almost on the border of that valley. Do you wonder that she tingled clear to the tips of her fingers and toes with little thrills of anticipation, excitement, and perhaps just a wee bit of fear? It was the fulfilment of a promise that their father had made them, that, when the deer moved over from their summer feeding grounds to the Valley of the Good Spirit, they should go with him to keep watch from a distance.

Even Aklak was excited, though he did his utmost not to appear so, and trudged along behind his father as if visiting the Valley of the Good Spirit were an everyday affair. All day they traveled. That is, they traveled what

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would have been all day where you and I live. It wasn't all day there, for you know way up in the North there is no real night in summer.

At last they reached the hut in which they were to live while the deer grazed on the hills of the Valley of the Good Spirit. This hut was a very rude affair, built partly in the ground and partly on the ground. It was of wood and stone with a skin roof and a long entrance passage. While not as big and comfortable as the house at home, it was the sort of thing these children were used to and it was quite good enough.

That night after the evening meal, Tuktu begged her father to once more tell the story of the Valley of the Good Spirit and of the chosen reindeer. "Why is it called the Valley of the Good Spirit?" she asked.

"Because," replied Kutok, "a wonderful and good spirit lives and moves there."

"Has any one ever seen him?" Aklak asked.

"No," replied Kutok, "none but the deer people, and of these only the chosen ones ever go down into that valley. But we know that a good spirit lives there, for always the deer

TUKTU AND AKLAK

that graze on the hills about the valley are safe from the wolf, the bear, and all other enemies. They do not need to be watched. There need be no herder here, were it not that it is well to know when the herd moves out, for then the summer grazing is over. It is a good spirit, for is it not true that every year eight deer are chosen and the next year returned to us the finest sled-deer in all the North? The Good Spirit dwells there and with him live many lesser spirits, who do his bidding."

Thus it was that Kutok told the children of what you and I know as fairies, and elves, and gnomes, and trolls. Eskimo children know nothing about these little unseen people. To them, all are spirits.

"Have you ever looked down into the valley?" asked Aklak.

"No," replied Kutok. "It is not well to be curious. I am content to stay here and wait for the deer to move. So must you be."

"What would happen if one should venture down into the valley?" asked Aklak.

"That no man knows, for no man has ever been so bold as even to think of doing such a

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thing," replied his father. "My son, be wise with the wisdom of your elders, and be satisfied. None but the deer folk ever enter that valley and these, only the chosen ones. We will stay here and from a distance watch the herd."

"If it is such a good spirit," thought Tuktu, although she didn't venture to express her thought aloud, "why should any one fear to go down into the valley?"

And she was still wondering as she fell asleep.

CHAPTER II

KRINGLE VALLEY

FOR the greater part of the short Arctic summer, the great herd of reindeer had grazed within sound of the waters of the Arctic Ocean lapping on the beach. More than two thousand deer were in that herd. They were not all Kutok's, although all were in his charge, for he was chief herder. Only about two hundred of the deer were his, as shown by the ear-marks. It was in deer that Kutok was paid for his services in looking after the great herd, which was owned by white men. With the approach of the long winter, the deer would move inland to winter range, and Kutok and his family would return to their permanent home.

For several days before the opening of this story the deer had been uneasy. They had done more or less milling. This means that they had gathered in a great body, the outer

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members traveling in a large circle and trotting tirelessly most of the time. Kutok knew the sign. "They will soon seek the Valley of the Good Spirit," said he to the other herders who assisted him. That very afternoon, the herd, as if at a signal from some wise old leader, began to move inland. In a short time, all the deer but the trained pack animals, which had been fastened, had disappeared.

It was then that Kutok had taken Tuktu and Aklak to the hut not far from the entrance to the Valley of the Good Spirit. It was the greatest event in the lives of these two little Eskimo folk, for always they had heard this valley spoken of with awe that was almost reverence. Now perhaps they might be permitted to see the wondrous colored mists that were said to rise from it.

Kringle Valley was the name by which it was known to the white men, none of whom believed in it, for none had ever seen it. But to the Eskimos, it was, as I have already stated, the Valley of the Good Spirit. Did they not know that on its gentle slopes wild grasses grew in such abundance and such richness as could be found nowhere else in all



Kutok watching the herd

KRINGLE VALLEY

the North? Were not the hillsides carpeted with wild flowers until they glowed in patches of brilliant color? You see, even the Arctic has its summer. It is a short summer, but a wonderful summer. Up there above the Arctic Circle there are days when the sun does not set at all and the number of days during which the sun does not set increases as one goes North, until at the North Pole there are six months and five days of continuous daylight. When the sun does set for a few hours, the twilight is so brilliant that it is difficult to think of the day as having ended when the sun disappears.

Kringle Valley is a valley of mystery. No man as yet has been privileged to enter it. No man has even looked down into it, save from a distance. It is said to be filled with a soft many-colored mist, which is neither of dampness nor of smoke. The Eskimos believe it to be the birthplace of the ever-changing, many-colored lights of the Aurora. Only the herders of the reindeer, which yearly seek pasturage on the hills about the valley, have ever ventured near enough to see even from a distance the curtain of many-colored mist.

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Around the winter firepots the story is told to the children of how every year just before the great herd leaves the valley, the deer gather at the upper end, and, there for a time, mill.

There is no fear among these milling deer. As they trot tirelessly in a huge circle, there is a constant shifting, until in turn each of the bucks has made at least one circuit in the outer ring. Thus each has a chance to show his full strength and beauty. From time to time as at a signal, one of these trotting deer leaves the circle and stands motionless just without the curtain of colored mist. When eight have been thus chosen, they disappear in single file in the mist of the valley, while the leaders of the great herd at once start the southern migration, and the herders know that no longer will the deer feed in Kringle Valley until toward the end of another summer.

And the herders know, too, that when the winter round-up in the corrals is made for the yearly count, the eight best sled-deer in all the herds will be missing. They will be the ones which vanished in the shimmering mists of Kringle Valley. And the herders

KRINGLE VALLEY

whose deer have so disappeared will rejoice greatly. They will be counted as being blessed above their fellows. They know that their deer are not lost. They know that when once again the great herd moves to Kringle Valley, they will find there the eight deer—fat, sleek, well-cared for. They know that these deer thereafter will never mingle with the herd, but will be for as long as they live the finest sled-deer in all the world. So it is considered good fortune if, after the herd leaves Kringle Valley, one's deer be found missing.

CHAPTER III

TUKTU'S SOFT HEART

THESE were happy days for Tuktu and Aklak. Tuktu's only duties were to cook meals for her father and brother. An Eskimo girl learns these things very young and Tuktu had been well taught. Aklak spent most of his time hunting. Their father did little but sit for long hours smoking and watching the distant hillsides where the reindeer grazed above the Valley of the Good Spirit. These were lazy, happy days and Kutok was making the most of them, for the summer was nearly at an end and he knew that when the herd moved there would be little time for lazing.

Tuktu roamed about picking the flowers that grew in such profusion, and also hunting for the flocks of young ptarmigan, for she dearly loved to watch these pretty "Chickens of the North." Not for the world would Tuktu have harmed one of them. Not for

TUKTU'S SOFT HEART

the world would she have told her brother Aklak how she felt when he brought in ptarmigan and other birds for the cooking-pot. But despite the fact that she ate them and enjoyed the eating, there was all the time in her heart a wee feeling of sadness, for Tuktu's heart was the loving heart.

Aklak was a good herder and had a way with the deer which some of the older herders might well have envied; but there was no one among all the herders or their families who could go among the deer as freely and unnoticed as could Tuktu. It was as if she held some strange power over the deer people; as if they had accepted her as one of their own number. She could approach the most timid and nervous among the wilder members of the big herds. As for the sled-deer, they might balk and strike at others, but never at Tuktu when she harnessed them. She loved them, every one, and seemingly they knew it.

So it was that Tuktu found her playmates among the wild people, who were not wild with her. Many a time had she stroked a ptarmigan on the nest. Many a time had the Arctic Hare fed from her fingers. The sea

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fowl paid no attention to her. Love has a strange way of making itself felt among the wild folk, and the soft heart of Tuktu was soft because of love.

So it was that when she found the home of a Blue Fox, about the entrance to which four half-grown little foxes were playing, she did not tell her brother. Each day she would steal away and sit by the entrance to the den, taking with her bits of meat for the little foxes. How she loved to see them roll and tumble about her feet. Sometimes two of them would get hold of the same piece of meat and then there would be a tug of war. Tuktu's eyes would dance and she would laugh softly. And then, when one little fox had succeeded in pulling the meat from the other, she would give the loser the extra piece which she always had for that purpose. And a short distance away sat Mother Fox, grinning happily.

While she picked the flowers and played with the foxes, and now and then mothered a young ptarmigan that had been lost from the flock, she dreamed of the Valley of the Good Spirit. It seemed such a little distance to

TUKTU'S SOFT HEART



the brow of the nearest hill overlooking that valley that she couldn't help but wonder what she would see if she should climb up there. But not once did the thought of really doing it enter her head. It was enough for Tuktuk that it was forbidden. It was not that she was afraid. She knew that her father was afraid. She knew that Aklak was afraid. She knew that they regarded the Good Spirit and the valley where he lived with reverence and awe. But Tuktuk was not afraid. It was enough for her that the Valley of the Good Spirit was sacred and not to be approached by other than the deer people. So, no matter how great her longing to look down from that hilltop, the thought of actually trying to do such a thing never entered her wildest dreams.

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She would sit for hours looking over toward the valley and wondering what the deer folk saw therein. Now and again she could see the deer moving on the upper hills. Once as she was watching them, she said softly—for she had a way of talking to herself: “I wish I were really a Tuktu—a caribou.”

“Why?” asked Aklak, who had stolen softly up behind her, just in time to hear what she said.

“Because then I might go into the Valley of the Good Spirit and I might even be chosen by the Good Spirit. Who knows?”

Aklak laughed, but it was a good-natured laugh. “It is the reindeer, not the caribou, who go down into the valley,” said he.

“But the caribou go too,” replied Tuktu quickly, “for only this morning I saw a band of them heading that way; and after all the reindeer are but tame caribou.”

“You saw a band this morning!” exclaimed Aklak excitedly, for all that morning he had been hunting for caribou and had not seen one.

Tuktu nodded. “Yes,” said she. “And Aklak, I’m glad you didn’t see them. I am

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glad they have gone where you cannot follow, for I would not like to have a caribou killed here so near to the Valley of the Good Spirit."

Aklak opened his mouth for a quick retort, then thought better of it. Perhaps after all Tuktu was right. Perhaps it were better that there should be no killing of the deer folk so near the Valley of the Good Spirit. He remembered that not even the wolves, nor the great Brown Bear for whom he was named, ever killed there.

CHAPTER IV

WHITEFOOT GOES ASTRAY

THE two pack-deer with which Kutok had moved up near the Valley of the Good Spirit had been kept fastened, each with a long rawhide line. But Kutok well knew that should they be allowed to go free, they would be likely to join the herds over on the hills above the valley. So they were kept tethered by long lines, and each day were moved to a new grazing ground. Sometimes Kutok attended to this; sometimes Aklak.

It happened one day that both Kutok and Aklak had gone hunting. Tuktu was not at all lonely, for loneliness is something that Eskimo folk know little about. Had she not the two deer for company, to say nothing of the little foxes with whom she played daily? It was nothing new for her to be left alone while her father and brother went hunting. It was Aklak who had moved the deer to new



Aklak goes hunting

WHITEFOOT GOES ASTRAY

grazing ground just before starting that morning. Two or three times Tuktu wandered over to pat them and pet them, as was her habit. When she became sleepy, she lay down for a nap. It was when she awoke from this that she discovered one of the deer had pulled the peg by which he had been fastened, and had wandered away.

"It must be that Aklak was in too much of a hurry when he drove that peg," thought Tuktu. "I must find Whitefoot and bring him back, or father will be very angry. He will blame Aklak, and it will be very unpleasant to have only one deer when it is time to move. Yes, I must find Whitefoot and bring him back." Whitefoot was the deer's name, for his off forefoot was white.

Having often helped in the rounding up of strays from the herd, Tuktu was skilled in reading signs. Almost at once she found traces of the wandering Whitefoot. He was grazing as he moved along, taking a bit now on this side and now on that side. Once she found a little bush in which the dragging peg had become entangled. Whitefoot had broken the branches of the bush in tearing himself

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free. Tuktu hurried on, for she saw that the course was leading toward the hills above the Valley of the Good Spirit.

"I must catch him before he gets much farther," thought Tuktu as she hurried on. "Father was right. Whitefoot is doing just what father said the deer would do if they should be free; he is going to join the great herd. I must get him before he gets there, or we shall see no more of him until the herd moves out from the valley."

It was warm work, for in summer it becomes unpleasantly hot, even way up there in the Northland. Tuktu was panting and perspiring, and she was growing tired. But not for an instant did she delay.

"I must get him. I must get him," she kept saying over and over. "I must get Whitefoot."

At last, from a little rise of ground, she saw the wanderer just going up a little hill. "Whitefoot!" she called, "Whitefoot! Stop, Whitefoot!"

At the sound of her voice, Whitefoot lifted his head and looked back. "Whitefoot! Whitefoot!" she called, hurrying forward.

WHITEFOOT GOES ASTRAY

Whitefoot hesitated. He looked back in the direction in which he had been traveling. Somewhere ahead of him was the great herd. The scent of it was borne to him on the wind. The longing to join it was almost irresistible. Behind him rang the commands of the little mistress he had learned to love and obey. "Stop, Whitefoot! Stop!" His nose demanded obedience to the call of the herd. His ears demanded obedience to the command of his little mistress. Which should he obey? No wonder Whitefoot hesitated.

It was not for nothing that Tuktu was known among her companions as "Little Fleetfoot." She was out of breath, she was tired and she was—oh, so hot! But despite all this, she ran now as if she were running a race. Just as Whitefoot decided that the call of the herd must be heeded, Tuktu threw herself forward on the dragging peg at the end of the long line which trailed behind Whitefoot. The decision was no longer his. Tuktu had won.

Holding fast to the line, Tuktu seated herself in the grass and slowly drew the reluctant Whitefoot toward her. All the time she

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talked to him, chiding him for wandering away; telling him how necessary he was; calling him names of endearment in one breath and scolding him in the next. Whitefoot stamped once or twice impatiently. Then, as if having made up his mind that he might as well make the best of the matter, he fell to grazing.

For a long time Tuktu sat there, for as I have said, she was tired. At last she arose. "Whitefoot," she said severely, "you have made me run a long way. Now you will have to carry me back."

As you know, Whitefoot was a pack animal. He had been trained to carry loads on his back. Tuktu had ridden him many times. So it was nothing new for him to feel his little mistress on his back. She turned his head toward camp and then she saw the white, thick mist of the Arctic fog rolling in from the coast. Already it had almost reached them.

CHAPTER V

LOST IN THE FOG

IN from the distant sea rolled the Arctic fog. It was as if one of those great, white fleecy clouds you have seen sailing high in the sky had come to earth and was being pushed forward to bury everything in its fleecy depths. Tuktu urged Whitefoot forward in the swinging trot the reindeer know. Would he be able to get her to camp before that swiftly moving fogbank would cut off all sight in any direction? She knew all about the fogs of the Far Northland. Had she been at home, she would not have minded it. But to be caught far from the camp was another matter.

"But I can trust Whitefoot," thought Tuktu. "The deer folk can find their way even though they cannot see. So long as I am safe on the back of Whitefoot, I need not worry. Whitefoot is headed in the right direction and he will take me safely back."

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The soft mist swirled about them and Tuktu could see nothing. She could see nothing and she could hear nothing but the clicking of Whitefoot's feet. There was no other sound. It was as if she and Whitefoot were alone in a white, wet world of silence. Click, click, click, click sounded Whitefoot's feet—a click with every step. It was comforting to hear that much, for each click meant a forward step, and each forward step meant so much nearer to the camp. At least, that is what Tuktu encouraged herself by thinking.

"I wonder where Father and Aklak are," she thought. "This fog must have caught them first, for they were hunting in the direction of the seacoast. They must have seen it coming and probably made camp. They will stay there until the fog lifts. If only I were back at the camp, I would not mind a bit. Trot, Whitefoot! Trot! Remember that Tuktu is on your back and she wants to get home."

Whitefoot did trot. He trotted steadily, despite the fact that he could see nothing. His head was carried forward and his nose

LOST IN THE FOG

out and his nostrils were extended. With every breath he was testing the damp air. By the motion, Tuktu could tell when he was going up a hill and when he started down again. She was enjoying the ride.

But there came a time when Tuktu began to wonder. "We should be there by this time," she thought. "Yes, indeed, we should be there by this time. Whitefoot has been traveling so fast that I am sure we should have been home long ago. If he did not trot along so steadily, I should think he were lost and wandering about. But he seems to know just where he is going. Oh dear, I wish I could see just a little way. Whitefoot, what is that?"

Whitefoot stopped abruptly. Through the mist at one side a dim form moved. Tuktu gave a little sigh of thankfulness and was about to drop to the ground, for she was sure that this was the other pack-deer that had been left grazing near the camp. But she didn't drop, for she became aware that another dim form was on the other side of her. And then she heard the muffled click, click, click of many feet—a sound that could be heard only

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where many deer were near. Too often had she listened to it not to know that she was now in the midst of a herd. She heard the click in front, behind, and on both sides, and as she strained her eyes could see dim shapes appear and disappear on all sides.

"Whitefoot!" she whispered, "Whitefoot, where have you taken me?"

She wondered if by chance some other herd of reindeer had moved in from the sea-coast on its way to the Valley of the Good Spirit. She wondered if it might be that she was in the midst of a band of caribou. She decided that this must be it. Probably Whitefoot had smelled, or perchance heard them, so had joined them.

She was not afraid. Did she not know that the reindeer are the most gentle of animals? Had she not lived with them and loved them from babyhood? She would remain on Whitefoot's back and hope that the fog would lift soon. If it did not, she would stop Whitefoot and push the peg into the ground to fasten him. Then they would remain there together until such time as the fog should disappear. There was only one thing that

LOST IN THE FOG

worried Tuktu. If she had to remain there long, what should she eat? But even this did not greatly worry her, for she was sure that the fog would last but a little while and she knew they could not be far from camp.

Whitefoot no longer was trotting, nor were any of the other deer folk. All seemed to be grazing, moving along slowly as they grazed. Tuktu became drowsy. Once or twice she nodded and the wonder was that she didn't slip from Whitefoot's back. And all about her there was the gentle click, click, click, click of moving feet, and now and then the soft intake of breath and gentle sniff of grazing deer.

CHAPTER VI

THE AWAKENING OF TUKTU

UNAFRAID, Tuktu rode in the midst of the great herd. How long it was before she had a chance to slip from Whitefoot's back, she had no idea. But presently from sundry sounds, dull but unmistakable, which reached her through the fog, she knew that the deer were bedding down. They were lying down to chew the cud, as you have so often seen cattle do. Whitefoot stopped. Tuktu slipped from his back. A moment later Whitefoot lay down. Tuktu snuggled up against his back. Despite the dampness of the fog, she was conscious of a pleasant warmth. In a few minutes she was asleep.

Tuktu was awakened by the sound of a bell. She knew it was a bell, because she had once heard a bell on a ship which had come in close to the shore when they were camped there. But this bell was sweeter far than had been

THE AWAKENING OF TUKTU

that bell on the ship, though that had seemed the most wonderful sound that she and Aklak had ever heard. Slowly she opened her eyes. Abruptly she sat upright and rubbed both eyes with her knuckles. Her first thought was that she was still in the fog. But when she looked up, she saw there was neither fog nor cloud. It was only when she looked below that she saw a fog, and this fog was not like any fog she ever had known. It was a mist of many colors, that shimmered and blended and parted and flashed, as she had so often seen the northern lights, or Aurora, do in the winter. And somewhere, hidden by that wondrous colored mist, was that silver bell. Do you wonder that Tuktu rubbed her eyes?

She was on the slope of a great hill. All about her, contentedly chewing their cud, were the deer people. As far as she could see in either direction, and across on the sides of the opposite hill, the deer lay. She knew that not only was Kutok's herd here, but also many other herds. Never had she seen such rich pasture. Never had she seen such flowers. And there were great masses of reindeer moss,

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lichens, showing the season's growth. No wonder the deer people sought the hillsides of this wondrous Vailey. She caught her breath. It had come to her where she was! She knew that she was with the herd on one of the slopes of the Valley of the Good Spirit. It was just as she had heard it described around the winter firepots, only far more beautiful.

Tuktu rubbed her eyes and rubbed her eyes. Perhaps this was only a dream. She put out her hand. There was Whitefoot contentedly chewing his cud, and Whitefoot was no dream. He was real, for even as she touched him, he bent his head and gently scratched one of his antlers with the point of a hind hoof.

Again she heard the soft, clear, silvery notes of that hidden bell. Then clearly, though faintly, she heard many other sounds. There was the blowing of trumpets, the beating of drums, fairy music coming from the heart of that wonderful mist below her, and the mist itself—never had she seen anything so beautiful! All the colors of the rainbow, all the wondrous colors of the sunset, all the

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shooting, flashing fires of the Aurora, seemed mingled there.

Tuktu knew that she ought to be afraid. Had not her father said that only from a distance had any man looked into that wondrous valley? Had she not seen fear in his eyes at the mere mention of the Valley of the Good Spirit?—he, who was not afraid to meet Nanuk, the polar bear, single-handed. Had she not heard the herders speak in whispers when they told of the Valley of the Good Spirit? Of a certainty, she should be afraid. But somehow she wasn't. She knew she ought to be, for she knew that she was where not even the boldest man in all the great Northland would dare to put his foot. Yet she was not afraid.

"It must be that the Good Spirit means no harm to little children," thought Tuktu. "It must be that the Good Spirit who loves the deer folk loves also little children, or he would not have allowed Whitefoot to bring me here. I wonder what is going on below that wonderful mist. I wonder! Oh, how I wonder. But if it were meant that I should know, or that any one should know, that mist

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would not be there. I guess it is all right to wonder, but it would be all wrong to try to find out. The deer people are satisfied to stay on these hills, so I will be satisfied. But there must be something very wonderful and very beautiful down there. I wish Aklak were here. He will not believe me when I tell him that I have looked into the Valley of the Good Spirit. My father will not believe me. No one will believe me. Only the deer folk will know. I, Tuktu, am looking down in the Valley of the Good Spirit and no harm has come to me. I think it must be because the Spirit of Love is here. The deer are rising. I wonder what that means. I must hold fast to Whitefoot, for he must take me home."

Whitefoot already had scrambled to his feet. Once more Tuktu climbed on his back. Then Whitefoot began to move toward the upper end of the Valley and Tuktu saw that all the other deer on both sides were moving in the same direction.

CHAPTER VII

THE GREAT MILL

NEVER had Tuktu seen so many deer together. Behind her, on both sides, in front of her, all along that hillside, the deer were moving forward. On the farther hillside countless numbers also were moving toward the head of the valley. They were moving slowly, but steadily, as with a purpose. As they drew near the upper end of the valley, Tuktu saw that there was a level plain surrounded by the hills. Out into the middle of this plain moved the great herd of deer. Then it was that Tuktu discovered that young deer and the mothers with the fawns were gradually being pushed to the center. She knew what it meant. She knew that presently that great herd would be milling on that plain.

Many times had Tuktu watched the deer mill. She had seen them mill in the great

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corrals into which they were driven for the yearly counting and ear-marking. She had seen them mill when they were grazing. But never had she seen such a mill as this one. Presently, Whitefoot began to trot. He had joined the ring of deer circling the outer edge of the great herd. There was a constant shifting and Tuktu saw that gradually the biggest and finest of the bucks were working to the outer edge of the herd. From Whitefoot's back she looked over what was like a forest of dead tree branches, all clashing and tossing as if in a wind. They were the newly-grown antlers of the deer not yet wholly out of the velvet, strips of the brown skin fluttering from them like pennants. Only the fawns were without antlers, for the does among the reindeer have antlers just as do the bucks. It is only in the caribou tribe that this happens in the deer family.

Faster and faster trotted that outside ring. More and more quiet became the great mass within the ring. Presently, all were still and only the outer deer were moving. Whitefoot was a splendid animal. That is why he had been chosen for a pack-deer. So he continued

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to trot in the outer circle. Click, click, click, click, click, sounded the feet of the trotting deer. There is no sound like it in all the animal world. It comes from within the foot as the deer steps, sometimes it is when the weight is put on the foot and sometimes when it is lifted from the foot. It is not made by the snapping together of the two parts of the hoof, as long was supposed, even by the herders themselves. The sound comes from within the foot, and just its purpose no one knows. Click, click, click, click, click—never had Tuktu seen the deer trot in a mill as they were now trotting. It seemed as if each was trying to show his best pace and each was trying to look his best. They had had plenty of food and their new coats for the coming winter had grown. All the old hair had fallen, giving way to the new hair.

Suddenly the deer stopped. They stopped and stood motionless. A moment later they started trotting again. Tuktu had been on the far side at the upper end of the plain, farthest from the curtain of beautiful mist. Now, when she came around, she saw that standing just outside the edge of that many-

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colored curtain was a magnificent reindeer. He stood motionless, his head held proudly to show to best advantage his widespreading antlers with many points.

Once more the herd began to mill. Presently, it stopped as abruptly as before. This time, when Whitefoot brought Tuktu around where she could see, there were two deer standing motionless, one behind the other, at the edge of the beautiful mist.

So it went on, until seven deer were standing there. Tuktu knew what it meant. She knew that she was looking at the chosen deer of the Good Spirit. She knew that one more was to be chosen. So far, she had not seen the choosing. Each time she had been on the far side of the herd when it had so abruptly stopped.

Perhaps you can guess how her heart was beating with excitement, as once more the outer ring of deer took up that fast, clicking trot. Would the eighth and last deer be chosen while she was on the far side and could not see?

Round and round the deer trotted. Once more Tuktu was coming in sight of the seven

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chosen deer. It seemed to Tuktu as if from that colored mist there shot out a flash of light. The deer stopped. Motionless they stood, as if frozen in their tracks. Tuktu held her breath. She saw that the head of every deer was turned toward that shining curtain of colored mist. A ray of light shot out from it. It touched a splendid deer two places ahead of Whitefoot. At its touch he stepped out from the circle and slowly took his place with the seven standing deer. It was Speed-foot, the finest deer in Kutok's herd.

The sound of a silver whistle was heard and the eight deer began to move forward. Slowly, proudly they walked. The leader disappeared in the wonderful mist. The second followed; and so on until the last one had vanished. Then once more the outer deer of the great herd began to mill. Tuktu saw that no longer were the does and fawns standing motionless within that milling circle. They were all headed in one direction and that was toward a low place in the hills leading out of the valley—a pass out to the great wide prairie. The time had come for the herd to leave the Valley of the Good Spirit.

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Would Whitefoot insist on going with them? Or, when they had left the valley, would he take her back to the camp?

He was once more bringing her around to the point nearest the cloud of mist, wherein the eight chosen deer had disappeared. Tuktu looked eagerly to see if by any chance she might get one more glimpse of them. And even as she looked, that ray of light shot out once more, and this time it touched Whitefoot. Whitefoot stepped out from the herd and stood motionless. .

CHAPTER VIII

THE GOOD SPIRIT

MOTIONLESS, facing the curtain of glorious mist, Whitefoot stood. On his back, as motionless, sat Tuktu. Once more the clicking of many feet had begun. The great herd was moving. Tuktu did not turn to look. She was not exactly frightened, but she was filled with a great awe. She felt as if she could not take her eyes from that curtain of mist, even if she would. The clicking back of her grew fainter. Then it ceased altogether. Still Whitefoot stood motionless.

Directly in front of Tuktu the mist began to glow, first faintly pink, then a beautiful rose, and finally a rich, warm red. Tuktu drew a long breath and closed her eyes.

When she opened them again, there stood before her one such as she had never seen before.

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He was short and jolly and round and fat,
With a fur trimmed coat and a fur trimmed hat.

He was dressed all in red. His hair was white and he wore a long, white beard. Never had Tuktu seen such a beard before. Eskimos have beards that are straggly and black. His eyes twinkled, like the twinkling of the stars on a frosty night. Around them were many fine wrinkles. They were laugh wrinkles. He was laughing now.

He laughed "Ha! Ha!" and he laughed "Ho! Ho!"

"Hello, little girl," he cried, "Hello!

What are you doing alone up here?

Have you come in search of your straying deer?"

Poor Tuktu! She couldn't find her tongue. She knew who this must be. She knew that this must be the Good Spirit—the Good Spirit whom no one had ever seen. She felt that she ought to slip from Whitefoot's back and bow herself at the Good Spirit's feet. But she couldn't move. No, sir, she couldn't move. When at last she could find her tongue, all she could do was to whisper, "Are you the Good Spirit?"

Those eyes looking at her in such a kindly



Tuktu and Santa Claus

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way, twinkled more than ever, and all the little laugh wrinkles around them grew deeper. He began to shake all over. He shook and shook. And he laughed so merrily that presently Tuktu herself began to laugh. She couldn't help it. It was catching. Yes, sir, it was catching.

"Ho! Ho!" said he, "My dear Tuktu,
It may be I am *that* to you.
I hope I am. It seems to me
That nothing could much nicer be.

"But elsewhere all the great world 'round,
Wherever there are children found,
I'm known as Santa Clause, my dear;
Or else, perchance, of me you hear
As Old Saint Nick, who once a year
With pack and sleigh and wondrous deer
To little folk who have been good,
And done those things that children should,
Brings Christmas Day the books and toys
That always gladden girls and boys.
But when the Christmas season ends
I hasten here to where my friends
The Fairies, Elves, and busy Gnomes
For countless years have made their homes.
Ho! Ho! Ho! You are, my dear,
The first who ever ventured here."

It was such a jolly voice, and those eyes twinkled so, and he shook all over so when he

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laughed, that Tuktu no longer had the slightest fear. "If you please, Good Santa," said she, "I have never heard of Christmas. What is Christmas?"

Santa's face sobered. No longer was the twinkle in his eyes, nor the laugh in the wrinkles around them. All the lines softened from his face and it became very beautiful. Simply, so that Tuktu could fully understand, he explained that Christmas is the season of loving thought. It is the season when self is forgotten and the desire of each is to make others happy.

It was a wonderful story he told her, a wonderful story of how all through the long years he had carried Christmas joy to the boys and girls of all the great world. He told her how all the year through the Fairies and Elves and Trolls and Gnomes were busy down in this valley, hidden by the wondrous many-colored mist, making the things which he was to take on his yearly journey to make glad the hearts of little children. He explained how it grieved him when sometimes he could leave nothing, because a little girl or a little boy had not been good. He told her

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how the Spirit of Love was abroad throughout all the Great World in the Christmas season, and how those who do for and give to others are the ones in whom the Christmas spirit lives all the year through, and who thus find the greatest happiness.

"It is not in receiving, my dear," said he,
"But in giving in love you will find to be
That fullness of joy, and that sweet content
For the beautiful Christmas season meant."

"And does no one give to you, kind Santa?"
Tuktu asked a little breathlessly.

You should have heard Santa Claus laugh then. Indeed, you should have heard him laugh! You should have seen his eyes twinkle. "Every year I receive the greatest gift in all the Great World," said he.

"And what is that?" whispered Tuktu.

"The love of little children," replied Santa Claus. "Not in all the Great World is there any gift to compare with the love of little children. And it is mine—all mine—every Christmas."

CHAPTER IX

THE CHOSEN DEER

TUKTU still sat on the back of Whitefoot. As Santa Claus talked, he came over to Whitefoot and gently stroked his face. Whitefoot stood without motion. It was the more surprising, because Whitefoot had always been rather unruly. He never had been one to willingly acknowledge a master. Only Tuktu had been able to handle him without trouble. Santa looked up straight into the eyes of Tuktu. "Tell me, my dear," said he, "how you came to venture into this valley. Did you not know that only the deer folk come here?"

"Yes, I knew," replied Tuktu in a low voice. "I knew, Good Santa, and I would not have thought of coming myself. It was Whitefoot who brought me here. He brought me here, and I didn't know where he was bringing me."

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Then she told how she had been lost in the fog, and how when she had awakened from her nap in the midst of the great herd, she had discovered where she was. She told how she would have left, even then, but could not. And her lips trembled a little as she talked, for she was fearful that the Good Spirit might think that she had done wrong.

"And why do you think that the deer folk come here every year?" inquired Santa Claus.

"That the blessed eight may be chosen," said Tuktu.

"And what, my dear, do you mean by the blessed eight?" Santa Claus inquired.

Then Tuktu told him of the tales she had heard around the winter firepots, and how it had been long known that every year eight deer were chosen from the great herd in the Valley of the Good Spirit; and how the following year these deer always returned to their owners, and were the finest sled-deer in all the North, so that the owner of one of these was considered blessed above his fellows.

Santa Claus sighed. "They ought to be good sled-deer," said he. "I spend enough time in training them. For what purpose, my

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dear, do you think these deer are chosen each year?"

Tuktu shook her head. "That," said she, "no one knows. All that is known is that each year the eight deer are chosen, and the following year they are returned to bless their owners. That is enough. The Good Spirit has some wise purpose, or the deer would not be taken and returned."

"Do you know," said Santa, "that the reindeer are among the oldest of all the peoples of the earth? It is so. It has been said that man was created to look after the reindeer, and the reindeer were created to look after man. Almost since man was, the reindeer have furnished him with food and clothing, and have carried him or drawn him wherever he wished to go. Have you driven deer to the sled? Have you ever sat behind a running reindeer and felt the rush of the cutting wind? And felt now and then the sting of the snow thrown from his flying feet?"

Tuktu's eyes shone and she clapped her hands softly. "Don't you love it?" she cried.

Santa Claus nodded, and he chuckled. "That is why the eight deer are chosen each

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year," said he. "When I made my first Christmas journey, it was a reindeer who drew my sled. My pack was small and my journey was short, and a single deer was all I needed. But as the Christmas spirit swept farther and farther throughout the Great World, and more and more children looked for my coming, my pack became larger and I had to travel much faster. So then I used two deer; and then three, four, five, until now eight are needed. Eight of the finest deer to be found in all the herds.

They must have speed and strength, for they must take me fast and carry me far. They must have beauty, with antlers of many points. They must be stout of heart and full of courage. They must be gentle. So it is that each year I must get a new team, and so each year the reindeer, the finest in all the great Northland, feed for a while in Kringle Valley. Then when the time comes, as it came to-day, they pass before me at their best, that I may choose those for my next Christmas journey into the Great World. Those you saw vanish in the colored mist are the eight who will take me next Christmas to

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carry joy to little folk. In all that great herd you saw, there is none other the equal of those chosen. And all the deer folk know it. Just once will they make that wonderful journey, for only for that one time will they be at their very best. At the next Christmas there will be eight others to take their places. But always the eight bear the same names. Would you like to hear them, Tuktu?"

Shyly Tuktu nodded. "If you please," she said.

My, how the eyes of old Santa Claus twinkled! "They are Donner and Blitzen, Dancer and Prancer, Dasher and Vixen, Comet and Cupid" said he. "I couldn't drive deer by any other names. They are magic names. And those deer will become magic deer when they start on their Christmas journey. Now, my dear, Whitefoot will take you straight back to the place from which he brought you. You have seen that which you may never see again—the choosing of the deer. But always you will remember that in the Valley of the Good Spirit, love dwells, and that love may be carried throughout the world, the blessed reindeer are chosen each year."

CHAPTER X

TUKTU'S HAPPY THOUGHT

“**D**ONDER and Blitzen, Dasher and Vixen, Dancer and Prancer, Comet and Cupid,” repeated Tuktu to herself, and her eyes were like stars. “Do the children out in the Great World love them?”

You should have seen Santa’s eyes twinkle then. And you should have seen all the laugh wrinkles around his eyes. “I suspect they do,” said he. “I suspect they do, for they love me and they must love the ones who bring me to them each year. But they have never seen my reindeer, so I really don’t know.”

And then you should have seen Tuktu’s eyes open. “Do you mean,” she asked, “that they never, never have seen your deer?”

Santa Claus nodded. “That’s what I mean,” said he. “You see, the night before Christmas when I make that magic trip, I

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must go so far and I must go so fast that there is no time, not even one wee minute, to waste. And so, no one sees me then. Sometimes little boys and girls hide and watch for me and for my deer. But they never see us. And those little boys and girls do not always find all the things they hoped I would bring them."

A dreamy look had come into Tuktu's eyes, a very far-away look. "Do they have as fine deer out there in the Great World as we have here?" she asked.

The laugh wrinkles wrinkled up more than ever, and Santa Claus laughed right out. "They have no deer at all, Little One," said he. "That is, they have no reindeer. Most of them would not know a reindeer if they saw one."

"No reindeer!" cried Tuktu, and such a look of astonishment as spread over her face. "How can they live without the wonderful deer? Oh, I am so sorry for those children. I wish—" Tuktu paused.

"What do you wish, Child?" Santa Claus asked in his kindly voice. "Tell me what you wish, for you know it is my business to make the wishes of children come true."

TUKTU'S HAPPY THOUGHT

Tuktu hesitated. She dropped her eyes shyly. "I wish," she said very softly, "that I could send them some reindeer."

Santa Claus looked at her sharply. He could read her thoughts and there was not one single little thought of self there. She was thinking of the children who had never seen the reindeer and how wonderful it would be if only they could see the blessed eight. When she looked up and saw Santa's kindly eyes studying her, she spoke impulsively.

"Kind Santa Claus," said she, speaking hurriedly, so hurriedly that the words tripped over each other, "couldn't you go down early some year with your blessed deer so that the children of the Great World might see them? I know they would love them, just as I do."

Santa Claus sighed. "I am afraid," said he, "there isn't time. You know it takes time to train deer, and there are no deer in all the Great Northland so well trained as those which take me out into the Great World every Christmas. You saw the eight chosen to-day. It will take me most of my time from now until Christmas to get them properly trained for that magic journey. If the deer were bet-

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ter trained when I got them, I might be able to do it. You know I do not even have to have reins, they are so perfectly trained. That is why when I am through with them, they are the finest sled-deer in all the world. They are no longer magic deer, but they are wonderful sled-deer. So you think the children of the Great World would like to see the deer? Perhaps they would! Perhaps they would! I shall have to think it over, my dear. I certainly shall have to think it over."

"Oh, if you only would!" cried Tuktu, her dark eyes shining with excitement. "I-I-I wish I could help. I am so sorry for children who have never seen the beautiful deer."

Down somewhere in the midst of the wonderful mist a silver bell rang. It was so clear, so sweet, that Tuktu turned her head to listen. When she looked back—Santa Claus had disappeared. The bell rang again and from out the curtain of mist came Santa's voice once more.

"Good-bye, little girl," said he. "The great herd moves, and you must leave the valley. But remember this, my dear, that whenever you think of others, others will think of you.

TUKTU'S HAPPY THOUGHT

And to those who love is love given in return. That is why Christmas is. Remember that, my dear, and always your Christmas will be merry. Better than that, it will be happy."

Abruptly, Whitefoot turned and began to move away.

CHAPTER XI

TUKTU TELLS HER STORY

WITH his long, swinging trot, Whitefoot rapidly made his way out of the Valley of the Good Spirit. Once only did Tuktu look back at the cloud of shimmering, many-colored mist. At one point it glowed a rich deep red, and as she looked, this turned to rose and finally to a faint pink and then vanished. Nowhere was the Good Spirit to be seen.

Out of the valley, over the hill, climbed Whitefoot, and Tuktu turned him in the direction of the camp. There presently she fastened him where Aklak had put him to graze. Her father and brother had not returned. As in a dream, she looked back to the hills around the Valley of the Good Spirit. Could it be that she had been there? Was it not all a dream? But if it were a dream, it had been a wonderful dream—the most beautiful of all dreams. She knew that

TUKTU TELLS HER STORY

Kutok and Aklak would not believe the story she had to tell. They would say that she had been asleep and the dream spirits had visited her. She looked across to the distant hills above the valley, and with a suddenness that startled her, she realized that not a deer was to be seen. Of course not. Had she not seen them move out of the upper end of the valley? There was the proof.

With the realization of this, all thought of anything else was driven from the mind of Tuktu—even the wonderful experience she had been through. The great herd was moving and there were no herders! She must get word back to the herders on the coast. She would take the other pack deer, for White-foot must be tired. Perhaps she would meet her father and brother on the way. She had just prepared to start when in the distance she saw Kutok and Aklak approaching. When they reached her, they were in high spirits. They had had good hunting and they brought with them plenty to eat.

"They have moved!" cried Tuktu. "The deer have left the Valley of the Good Spirit." Kutok threw down his load and hurried to

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the rise of ground from which he had been accustomed to watch the deer on the distant hills. Long he looked, searching every bit of ground within range of his eyes. Not a deer was to be seen.

"It is so, Little Tuktu," said he on his return. "The herd has started for the winter grazing grounds. It is time that we also should move. Aklak shall go back to carry word to the herders, while you and I will follow the deer. They will move slowly, so there is no hurry. But it is well that we should catch up with them soon, lest the wolves attack, finding them unguarded."

So Aklak started back to the summer camp to send up the herders and to help break the camp and move toward the winter home. Tuktu and her father, with a small skin iglu or tent wherein to sleep, and food enough for their immediate needs, started at once to catch up with the great herd. Through years of experience, Kutok knew in what direction the deer would travel and the shortest way to reach them.

They traveled too fast for much talking. Tuktu longed to tell her father what she had

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seen in the Valley of the Good Spirit, but somehow she couldn't. "He will laugh at me," she thought. "He will not believe, and he will laugh at me; and I do not want to be laughed at." So she said nothing. But all the time there was a song in her heart.

It was not until Aklak had rejoined them that she told of her adventure in the Valley of the Good Spirit. At first Aklak laughed, as she had known he would. "It was a dream, Tuktu," he cried. "It was a dream. You must have slept through that fog while Father and I were hunting, and the dream spirits took you with them. No one ever has seen the Good Spirit, and no one ever will."

But Tuktu stubbornly insisted that it was not a dream, until at last even Aklak began to believe that it might be so. You would have laughed to hear him ply her with questions, all the time pretending that he didn't believe a word of it. But Tuktu caught him looking at her with a respect in his black eyes which was new in her experience. And she noticed, too, that he no longer teased her, and that now he was never selfish. The biggest share of anything was always hers. Never

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had he been so gentle and thoughtful. Yet never once could she get him to say that he believed her story of the Valley of the Good Spirit.

Now there was one thing that Tuktu did not tell Aklak. It was that the last deer chosen was from their father's own herd. Never had Kutok had a deer chosen by the Good Spirit from his herd until now. Tuktu had known that it was her father's deer, because she had been near enough to see the earmark. Besides, there was no other deer in the herd to compare with it. Sometimes when Aklak insisted that it was all a dream, she would be almost persuaded that he was right. Then she would remember that it was her father's finest deer Speedfoot, which had been chosen.

"If," she would say to herself, "we cannot find Speedfoot in the round up, I shall know for a certainty that I did not dream. It will be the proof."

Thereafter she spent many hours wandering in and out through the great herd looking for this particular deer and rejoicing that she could not find it.

CHAPTER XII

THE DEER PEOPLE

WINTER had come. The deer were on their winter feeding grounds. Could you have been there, you would, until you had watched them awhile, have wondered where they could find anything to eat. As far as could be seen, and far, far beyond that, there was nothing but snow.

But the deer people minded this not at all. They knew that the snow was but a blanket to protect and keep in splendid condition the food they loved best, the reindeer moss as it is called, which carpeted the ground, the lichens which nature had provided specially for the reindeer and caribou.

Tuktu liked to go out and watch them paw down through the snow. "See, Aklak," she cried, "they know just where they will find the best food. Do you suppose they never make mistakes?"

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"The deer are wise with a wisdom not given us," replied Aklak. "Perhaps they make mistakes sometimes, but it is not often. I heard such a queer thing the other day. It makes me laugh every time I think of it."

"Tell me, for I want to laugh too," cried Tuktu. "What was it, Aklak?"

Aklak chuckled. "You remember the visitors that came in great ships last summer," said he. Tuktu nodded. "Well, one of them who never had seen reindeer before, asked if the deer used their horns to shovel away the snow in winter. He said that he had been told this, and that many people believed it to be so. It is a lucky thing it isn't so, or those big, old bucks would go hungry now that they have dropped their horns. But just look at the way they are pawing up that moss over there. I guess it is a good thing they haven't their horns, or they would be so greedy and selfish that they would get all the best of the food. See, Tuktu! See that young spike-horn over there driving away the old buck from that moss he has uncovered!"

Sure enough, a youngster with only two sharp spikes for horns was butting a big old

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buck who had just pawed away the snow from a bed of reindeer moss. Those spikes were sharp and they made the old buck grunt. Having no horns himself, he could not fight back except by striking with his forefeet, and these the youngster took care to avoid. So finally the old fellow gave up and went to look for a new supply of food while the youngster ate undisturbed.

"I have wondered a great many times," said Tuktu, "why it is that the old bucks drop their wonderful antlers so long before the mother deer and the young spikehorns do. But I guess I know now. It is because they are the strongest, and so they are made to look after the weaker ones, whether they want to or not."



Aklak nodded. "That's it I guess," said he. "By and by those little spikes will drop. Then the only ones to have horns will be the

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mothers. Theirs will not drop until after the fawns are born. Do you know why the reindeer always face the wind when they are feeding?"

"So that the wind may bring them the scent of any enemies that may be ahead of them," replied Tuktu promptly.

Aklak nodded. "That is one reason, but it isn't the only reason," said he. The wind keeps their eyes clear of drifting snow. So they always face the wind, no matter how bitter it may be. They are a wise people, the deer people. They know how to take care of themselves. They cannot see as well as some other animals, but they can smell and hear better than most. Their wild cousins, the caribou, are the same way. When we are hunting them we have to take the greatest care that they neither hear nor smell us."

The children were standing on the outer edge of the herd. As always, Tuktu was watching for a glimpse of Speedfoot, the splendid deer she felt sure the Good Spirit had chosen. Now, for the first time she mentioned it to Aklak. He knew the deer she meant. He had hoped that some day he

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might have it for his own. So now when Tuktu told him that she was sure it had been chosen by the Good Spirit, and that she had been unable to find it anywhere in the herd, he straightway began keeping watch himself.

Together they passed back and forth through the grazing herd. They are a gentle people, these reindeer folk. The children could quite safely go about among them as freely as they pleased. There was nothing to fear.

Long they searched, but in the end Aklak had to admit that Speedfoot was missing. "It may be that Amarok, the wolf, has gotten him," said he. "Or it may be that he has strayed into one of the other herds. We cannot know until the deer are driven into the corrals and counted."

Tuktu merely smiled. "I know," said she. "Amarok has never set tooth in him, and he has not strayed to another herd. He is one of the chosen of the Good Spirit. You shall see, Aklak, that I am right when the count comes."

"But not even the count will tell us if Amarok has killed him," said he.

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There was a faraway look in Tuktu's eyes and a half-smile hovering around her lips. "You will find him next summer when we move over near the Valley of the Good Spirit," said she. "Then will you know that I speak truly. He is of the chosen eight, the blessed deer of the Good Spirit."



CHAPTER XIII

THE WILFUL YOUNG DEER

OF ALL the young deer in the great herd, —and there were many,—Little Spot was the most wilful. He was called Little Spot because he was marked exactly like his mother, who was known as Big Spot. Each had a white spot between the eyes. Now, Big Spot was one of the wisest leaders among all the reindeer people. She was wise in the ways of the wolf and the bear, and she was wise in the ways of men. Under her leadership the herd thrived and increased and was seldom troubled.

But with all her wisdom, Big Spot was a poor mother. You see, she was just like a great many other mothers—she spoiled her children. So Little Spot, who was so like his mother, had never been taught to mind. Almost from the day of his birth, which had been in the spring before the snow had melted,

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he had been headstrong and wilful. He had been a handsome baby, as reindeer babies go, and his mother had been very proud of him. Perhaps that is why she spoiled him. Anyway, he went where he pleased and did what he pleased and was forever in trouble of some sort. When he got his first horns, two sharp spikes, he made such a nuisance of himself that he soon became known as the worst young deer in the whole herd. Other young deer would have nothing to do with him, because he was so overbearing. He was a little bigger and a little stronger than any others of his own age, and this, together with the fact that he had been allowed to have his own way, had quite spoiled him.

"My son," said his mother, when she found him with a small band of caribou which he had run away to join, "follow me to the top of yonder hill. I want to talk to you."

"I don't want to be talked to," said Little Spot, with an angry toss of his head. "I know what you want. You want me to go back with the herd. I'm not going. I'm going to stay with my wild cousins, the caribou. I don't want to go back to the herd. I won't go

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back to the herd." He stamped his feet in the naughtiest way.

"Very well," said his mother. "You may stay with your cousins, the caribou. But remember that if you need me, you will find me on the top of that hill over there."

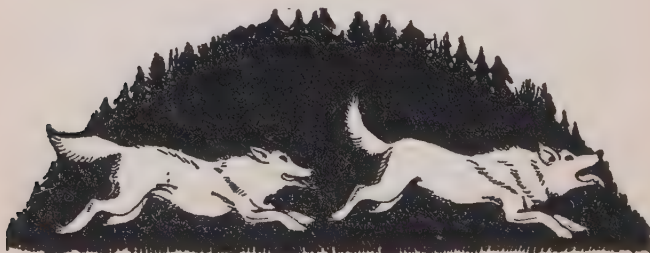
Little Spot tossed his head. He sniffed. You see, he didn't like it at all that his mother should think that he had any need of her. Had he not horns already? He felt quite equal to taking care of himself. So he tossed his head and sniffed, then went over to join some of the young caribou about his own age.

His mother said nothing more, but slowly walked away in the direction of the hill. When she reached the top, she stood motionless for a long time. Looking up, Little Spot could see her against the sky and, he, being a foolish young deer, became very angry. He felt that she was keeping watch over him. So he pretended not to see her, and, when presently the small band of caribou started to move away briskly, he trotted along with them. They were glad to have him; at least they made no objections. The farther he got from that hill where his mother still stood,

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the bigger and more important he felt. He was out in the Great World now. He was master of his own movements. There was no one to make him do this or do that. He held his head high and he stepped high. You see, he was trying to look as important as he felt.

Without warning, four great gray wolves swept out from behind some willow trees to cut off the young caribou from the remainder of the band. Such terror as there was then! Each young caribou started in a different direction. It was well for Little Spot that he was swifter of foot than any of the others. At the first glimpse of the dreaded wolves, he had whirled about and started back for that hill where his mother was. They were the first wolves he had ever seen, but he knew



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what they were. Not once did he look behind to see what was happening to the young caribou. Forgotten was all his pride. He wanted his mother, and he wanted her as he had never wanted her before. Was she not the wisest of all the mothers of the big herd? She would know what to do. She would know how to care for him.

He looked over to the top of that little hill. For a moment it seemed as if his heart stopped beating. He could not see Big Spot anywhere. Had she left him after all? Had she started off on that long swift trot of hers to get back to the herd? The mere thought that he might never see her again gave added speed to Little Spot. Never had he run as he was running now. But it was not good running. It was unwise running, for it was tak-



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ing his wind and his strength. He was panting hard when he came over the top of the hill. There, in a little hollow just beyond, stood his mother.

"What is it, my son?" said she, as little Spot crowded against her, panting as if he could never get his breath again. "What is it, my son? I thought you wanted to go out into the Great World."

"Wolves!" panted Little Spot, "Wolves! We must run!"

His mother merely walked up to the brow of the hill and looked back. "Truly, my son, they are wolves," said she, and returned to him as if wolves were the most commonplace things in the world.



"They are wolves."

CHAPTER XIV

WHEN THE WORLD WAS YOUNG

LITTLE Spot, the wilful young reindeer, trembled as he crowded up to his mother. He couldn't get close enough to her. He no longer wanted to be out in the Great World by himself. He wondered that his mother did not run. Every moment or two he looked back to see if those wolves were coming up over the hill. But Big Spot seemed in no hurry at all. You see, she was wise with the wisdom of experience. She didn't want Little Spot to get over his fright so soon that he would forget the lesson he had learned. Then, too, she wanted him to get rested a little and get his wind back.

At last, she quieted Little Spot's fears. "Those wolves did not chase you, my son," said she. "They chased the young caribou, and it is very fortunate for you that they did."

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"I'm sure I could run faster than those wolves," said Little Spot boastfully.

"Yes, you could," replied his mother. "You could run faster than they could for a while, but you do not know the patience of wolves, my dear. You would have run so hard and so fast that presently you would have tired yourself out so that the wolves would have had no trouble in catching you. Ever since you were a little fawn I have told you about the wolves, and that they are our worst enemies; but I don't think you ever have believed it. Now you have seen them and you know what they are like. The wolves are very smart people. They watch for a deer to stray away. Then they get between the herd and that deer. When this happens, that deer will not live long."

"Have the deer always been afraid of the wolves?" asked Little Spot.

"Ever since the days when the world was young," replied his mother.

"Tell me about the days when the world was young," begged Little Spot.

For a few moments his mother said nothing. Gradually, into her big, dark eyes there crept

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a far-away look. "Once upon a time," she began at last, "the world was mostly water, like the salt water that you saw in the summer."

"But where did the deer live then?" interrupted Little Spot.

"There were no deer then," said his mother. "There were no deer and there were no wolves and there were none of those two-legged creatures called men. You see, Old Mother Nature had not made them yet, for there was no land for them to live on. But by and by there was land and then for a very long time Old Mother Nature was very, very busy making the different kinds of people to live on the land. Some of these people she made to live where it was summer all the year round."

You should have seen Little Spot's big ears prick up at that. "Is there such a place?" he cried.

His mother nodded. "Yes," said she, "I am told there is a land where it is summer all the time. How do you think you would like that?"

Little Spot thought it over for a moment.

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"I shouldn't like it," he decided. "Why, if it is summer all the time, there can be no snow! What a queer land it must be without the beautiful snow. I shouldn't like it."

His mother again nodded her head approvingly. "Neither should I, my son," said she. "But it seems that in those days when the world was young, all the people, big and little, wanted to live where it was summer. So after awhile it became difficult for all the people to get food enough. It was then that the hard times began, and some of the big people began to hunt the little people for food.

"Now, it happened that Mr. and Mrs. Caribou, the first of all the caribou, had wandered beyond the land where it was summer all the time. They had come to the land where it was summer for half the year and winter for the other half. When the winter came, they moved back, because you see they were not fitted to make their living when snow covered the ground, and they were not clothed warmly enough to stand the bitter winds. But they always stayed as long as they could before moving south, for they loved the Northland.

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Then, too, they felt safer there, for there were fewer to hunt them.

"It was on the edge of the Northland that Old Mother Nature found Mr. and Mrs. Caribou looking longingly at the land they must leave because of the coming of the snow and ice. 'How would you like to live in the Northland all of the time?' asked Old Mother Nature.

"Mr. Caribou looked at Mrs. Caribou, and Mrs. Caribou looked at Mr. Caribou, and then both looked at Old Mother Nature. Mr. Caribou spoke rather hesitatingly. 'We could not eat when all the ground is covered with snow,' said he.

"'There is always plenty of food beneath the snow,' replied Old Mother Nature. 'You could dig away the snow with your feet and find plenty.'

"'But we should freeze,' protested Mrs. Caribou, and shivered; for in those days the coats of the caribou were thin."

"'But supposing I gave you warm coats and fitted you to live in the Northland; would you do it?' Old Mother Nature asked.

"Again Mr. Caribou looked at Mrs. Cari-

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bou and Mrs. Caribou looked at Mr. Caribou, then both nodded.

“So Mother Nature gave them warm coats. She gave them each a thick mantle of long hair on the neck, so that it hung down and the wind could not get through it. She fashioned their feet so that they were different from the feet of any other of the deer family, and they could walk in snow and on soft ground, where others could not go. Then she sent them into the Northland, and there the caribou have been ever since.”

“But what about the reindeer?” cried Little Spot.

“I am coming to that,” replied his mother.



CHAPTER XV

THE FIRST REINDEER

MR. and Mrs. Caribou were the first of all the caribou to make their home in the Far North, and they loved it. Old Mother Nature had told them truly that they would find plenty of food. So they and their children and their children's children took possession of all the great land where the snow lay most of the year. They found the moss, which you like so well, my son," said his mother. "They found the moss, and they found that it was best in winter. It isn't true moss you know, but is called reindeer moss by everybody. In the summer they lived on grass and other plants, just as we do. So in

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time there became very many caribou, and they lived in peace, for it was long before others came to live in the Land of Snow.

"But there came a time when these two-legged creatures called men appeared. They were hunters, and they hunted the caribou. They needed the meat for food and the skins for clothing and to make their tents. So the caribou became necessary to men. Then one day the hunters surrounded a band of caribou and captured alive all the fawns and young caribou. These they kept watch over and protected from the wolves and the bears, which had by this time come to live in the Northland. And because there were no wise old deer to protect these young deer, the young deer did not try to run away. They were content to graze near the homes of the hunters. In time, they grew and had fawns of their own, and these grew, and the herd increased. And these, my son, were the first reindeer. They were necessary to man if he would live in the Far North, and they found that man was necessary to them.

"They furnished man with food and clothing. From their antlers he made tools. Man

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furnished them protection and found the best feeding grounds for them, so that they lived better and more contentedly than their cousins, the wild caribou, for the latter had always by day and night to be on the watch for enemies.

“Then one day a boy fastened a halter to a pet deer and fastened him so that he could not stray away. In time that deer became used to the halter and to being fastened. Then the boy built a sled. It wasn’t such a nice sled as the sleds of to-day, because you know this was the first sled of its kind. Then he fastened the deer to the sled and, with a long line fastened to the halter on each side of the deer’s head, so that he might guide him, the boy climbed on the sled. Of course, that deer was frightened and he ran. By and by the sled upset. But the boy still held the reins. That was the first reindeer to be driven by man. The boy’s father had seen all that happened. He built a better sled, and he and the boy trained that deer and other deer. Then with these deer they made long journeys. So it was that the reindeer became of still more use to man.”

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"But I don't want to be harnessed and driven and have to drag a sled," said Little Spot.

"That shows your lack of wisdom, my son," replied his mother. "The deer who best draw the sleds are the deer that are cared for best, and will live longest. Other deer are killed for food and for their skins, but not the deer who draw the sleds. Those are the deer that are thought most of, and it is my hope that you will one day be the finest sled-deer in all the herd. Who knows? Perhaps you may be chosen in the Valley of the Good Spirit to be one of the eight deer who once in the early winter of each year carry the Good Spirit on a wonderful journey out into the Great World, that he may spread Love and Happiness. Do you remember, my son, how on the day we left the Valley of the Good Spirit, all we mother deer and all you youngsters stood while the finest bucks in all the herd milled around us? And how every once in a while they stopped?"

Little Spot bobbed his head. "I remember," said he.

"Each time they stopped," replied his

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mother, "the Good Spirit chose one of their number to be added to his team for that wonderful journey out into the Great World. They become magic deer just for a little while, at a time that men folk call Christmas. They become magic deer, and all the children of the Great World love them, though they never have seen them. So, my son, be wise in the wisdom of the deer folk. Be not unruly, should it be that you are chosen to draw the sled of a man, for it is only the best sled-deer that are chosen by the Good Spirit and become the Christmas deer for that magic journey into the Great World. Now, we must be getting back to the herd, or those wolves may get upon our trail."

Little Spot trotted beside his mother, Big Spot, over the snow-covered prairie, and as he trotted he thought deeply of all his mother had told him. And as he thought, his eyes were opened, so that by the time they reached the big herd, Little Spot was no longer a wilful young deer. He no longer thought that he knew all there was to know, but he did his very best to try to learn all there was

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for a wise deer to know. And you know when one tries to learn, it is surprisingly easy.

So, from being the most wilful and unruly of all the young deer, Little Spot became the most obedient and the best-mannered.

CHAPTER XVI

LITTLE SPOT AND TUKTU DREAM

DO YOU ever have day-dreams? If you do, you know that they are made up partly of wishes, partly of plans and partly of the same sort of stuff that sleep dreams are made of. Tuktu was very busy these winter days. She was very busy indeed, as were all the Eskimo girls and their mothers. What do you think she was doing? You never would guess. She was chewing. Yes, sir, she was chewing. And it wasn't gum that she was chewing, either, although she dearly loved to chew gum when she got the chance. She was chewing skins.

What's that? You think I am fooling? I'm not. Tuktu was chewing skins. Tuktu was making boots for her brother and her father. They were made of skin, and Tuktu was chewing this in order to soften it and make it workable.

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But as she chewed, and later as she sewed, making the skin clothing for herself and for her brother and father, she did a great deal of dreaming. Perhaps you can guess what she dreamed of. It was Santa Claus. She didn't call him Santa Claus even to herself. She still called him the Good Spirit. I think myself that is rather a beautiful name for Santa Claus.

And it wasn't of things that she wanted Santa Claus to bring her that Tuktu dreamed. It was of helping Santa Claus. It seemed to her that nothing in all the Great World would be so good, or make her so happy, as to help the Good Spirit spread the message of love and good cheer and happiness to all the little children less fortunate than she. Now, this is going to surprise you. Tuktu actually thought that she lived in the finest part of all the Great World, and she was sorry for little boys and girls who lived where there were no reindeer and where snow and ice were seldom found. She was sorry for boys and girls who had never ridden behind a fast-trotting deer. Yes, Tuktu thought that she lived in the very best part of all the Great



Tuktu making boots with her mother

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World, and she loved it. And she wished somehow that she could help Santa—the Good Spirit—when he carried happiness and joy to all the Great World. Sometimes when she dreamed, she would forget to chew the skin that she was at work on, and her mother would gently remind her that the boots were needed.

She wondered if she could make a pair of boots for the Good Spirit, and then her face grew warm with shame at her boldness. How could any one even think of doing anything for the Good Spirit? For could not the Good Spirit have all things he desired? And then she remembered something. She remembered that the Good Spirit had said that those chosen deer ought to be good sled-deer because of the time he spent training them. Supposing she and Aklak could get the deer trained so well beforehand that the Good Spirit would not have to spend time in training them. Perhaps then he could start earlier. Then she sighed, for how could she be sure the Good Spirit would choose the deer she and Aklak trained?

And while Tuktu dreamed her day-dreams

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as she worked, Little Spot, the finest young deer in all the herd, was dreaming day-dreams. And the queer part of it is, his dreams were very like the dreams of Tuktu. He dreamed of being a magic deer. He dreamed of being one of that team of magic deer with which the Good Spirit made his wonderful journey out into the Great World each Christmas. And because he remembered what his mother had said, he tried very hard to be what a young deer should be, for he hoped that in time he would be chosen for a sled-deer. Perchance if he were chosen for a sled-deer and became the best sled-deer in all the great herd, he might some day be chosen in the Valley of the Good Spirit. So he did his best to grow strong and handsome, and to be the swiftest-footed, for he had discovered that it was the strongest, handsomest and swiftest deer that were chosen to draw the sleds of the herders.

But there was one big difference in the dreaming of these two young dreamers. Tuktu had no thought of self, whereas Little Spot was thinking chiefly of his own glory. He had no thought of others, but only great

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ambition for himself. There are many people like Little Spot in this Great World.

Now, I don't want you to think that Tuktu spent all her time chewing and sewing skins. That was work which could be done when the great storms and the bitter cold kept her indoors. She had her play time, as well as her working time, and there were many happy hours spent with Aklak, helping him herd the deer, for she dearly loved the deer people and they loved her. Even the wildest of them and the most unruly would allow Tuktu to approach and even to pet them. Aklak was growing to be a very fine herder. His father, Kutok, said that Aklak would one day be the best herder in all the Northland. But not even Aklak understood the deer as did Tuktu.

CHAPTER XVII

TUKTU AND AKLAK HAVE A SECRET

IT WAS while Tuktu was watching Aklak training a young deer to the sled, the great idea came to her. It just happened that the young deer was none other than Little Spot. And because he wanted to be a sled-deer, and because he was very proud over having been chosen, Little Spot was making no trouble at all. He was not yet old enough to be a real sled-deer, and Aklak had started to train him just for fun. He was looking forward to the day when Little Spot should be fully grown. He wanted to see if he would be a better sled-deer for having begun his training early.

“Aklak,” cried Tuktu. “I know you don’t really believe that I saw the Good Spirit, but you know that the deer visit the Valley of the Good Spirit every year; and you know that every year some are chosen and do not return with the herd; but are found the next year.”

TUKTU'S AND AKLAK'S SECRET

Aklak nodded. "Yes," said he, "I know all that."

"Then listen to me, Aklak," said Tuktu. "Those deer are chosen because they are the finest in all the great herd. They are chosen to be the sled-deer of the Good Spirit when he makes his great journey to carry the message of love and happiness to the children of the Great World. Why couldn't we train those deer for the Good Spirit, that he may not have to do it himself?"

Boylike, Aklak laughed. "How," he demanded, "can we train the deer when we do not know which deer the Good Spirit will choose? You say that this year he has chosen one from our own herd, but it is the first time it has happened even if it be true. The other deer were chosen from other herds. So how can we know what deer the Good Spirit may choose?"

"We cannot know," replied Tuktu. "That is, we cannot know for a certainty. But we can do this, Aklak: we can pick out the finest and the handsomest, the swiftest and the strongest of the deer in our herd, and we can train them—I mean, you can train them,

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Aklak, and perhaps I can help a little. Then, perhaps, when the herd visits the Valley of the Good Spirit next summer, he will discover that these deer are already trained. I just know that he will *know*. Just think, Aklak, how wonderful it would be to help Santa, the Good Spirit."

Now, Tuktu's thought was all of helping the Good Spirit, but Aklak, though he thought of this, was more selfish in his thoughts, though he said nothing to Tuktu. To himself he thought, "If Tuktu should be right and the Good Spirit should choose the deer I have trained, it would be the first time that all the magic deer have been chosen from one herd. If the owner of one or two chosen by the Good Spirit is blessed, how much greater would the blessing be if the eight deer should be chosen from one herd."

The more Aklak thought over Tuktu's plan, the better it seemed to him. So, a few days later when they were out together, he promised to try it.

"But we must keep the secret," said he. "No one must know what we are doing, for the herders would laugh at us and make fun



Tuktu watching Aklak train a young deer

TUKTU'S AND AKLAK'S SECRET

of us. They will see me training the deer, but they will not suspect that they are being trained for a special purpose. Let us go out now and pick out those to be trained."

Now, Aklak was a splendid judge of deer. He knew all the fine points, for he had been well taught by his father. So it was that often when Tuktu would point out what seemed to her a particularly fine animal, Aklak would shake his head and would point out to her that it was not as fine as it seemed. There would be some little blemish. Now and then he would find a deer that suited him. Sometimes the deer would be wild and difficult to approach. Then Tuktu would help. Sometimes the deer would struggle after it had been roped, and every time that Aklak came near would strike with its forefeet, as only a reindeer can. Then Tuktu would pet it and soothe it, until in a few days it would be gentle and easy to handle.

At first, Aklak would look only among his father's deer. He wanted those eight deer to be from his father's herd. And so he would not look at some of the finest deer of the great herd, which his father did not own,

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but of which he had charge. That was the selfishness in Aklak. But when Tuktu refused to have anything to do with these deer, because there were finer ones in the great herd, he admitted after a while that she was right. He didn't want to admit it, but he was honest. He knew that Tuktu was right. He knew that the Good Spirit would not choose less than the best.

All that winter Aklak worked with his eight deer. Every day he drove one or another of them. The other herders began to take notice, and some of them became envious. But he was the son of Kutok, the chief herder, and there was nothing they could do about it. As for Kutok, he became very proud. "Said I not that Aklak would one day become a great herder?" he would demand, as he watched the boy driving a deer as none of the other herders could drive it.

And all that winter Tuktu and Aklak kept their secret.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE ROUND-UP

SPRING came, and before the snow was gone, the fawns were born. It was a cold, cold world that those baby deer came into, but they did not seem to mind it. Those were busy days for Tuktu and Aklak, for they spent much time looking up the mother deer to see that their babies were properly taken care of. Now and then they would find a fawn that had lost its mother and then would begin a search for the mother. Little by little the snow disappeared and the big herd began to move toward the sea. It was heading toward the summer range.

Tuktu and Aklak looked forward eagerly to the summer visit to the coast—Aklak for the hunting and fishing, and Tuktu for the delight of watching the sea fowl and hunting for their eggs. Then there was the great round-up. That was always exciting. Tuktu

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took no part in it, but Aklak was big enough now to help. The round-up would occur soon after the herd reached the coast. Some of the herders had already gone ahead to prepare the great corral. This was simply a huge pen of brush and sticks with wings to it, so that as the grazing herd came on, it got between these wings without knowing it at first, and then kept on going until the whole herd was in the great pen, called the corral. The herders would follow and shut them in.

The families of the herders who had gone ahead were taken with them, so that the camp was made and everything ready before the ar-

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rival of the deer. The latter had not been driven, but had been allowed to take their own time, grazing as they went. But they too were eager to get to the shore, and so they had moved forward quite rapidly.

One morning Aklak came hurrying in with word that the great herd was approaching. Everybody went out to see the round-up and to help by seeing that none of the deer were allowed to get outside of the wings of the corral. The leaders of the big herd unsuspectingly came up over the brow of a little hill. It was beyond this hill that the great corral had been built, so that the deer would not see it until they were over the hill. At first, the herd was widely spread, but as they came within the wings of the great corral, the fences forced them nearer together, until as they entered the corral they were closely packed. Once inside, they began to mill, which is, as you know, to go around and around. It was a wonderful sight. It would have been still more wonderful had they had their antlers, but these had been shed and the new ones had but just started. On the farther side of the corral was a gateway open-

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ing into a very narrow passage, which grew narrower and narrower until it was just wide enough for one deer to pass through. Into this the herders turned the milling animals as fast as they could be handled. As the deer came through this narrow passage, they were counted and the ear-marks were noted. Of course, there were the ear-marks of several owners in that great herd and each kept a record of the deer bearing his ear-mark, as they came through this narrow passage called the "chute." The fawns going through with their mothers were roped as they came out of the chute and ear-marked, each one being given the ear-mark of its mother. It was very exciting.

Now, could you have sat on the corral fence and seen that great herd of animals milling within the corral, I am sure you would have held tight to your seat. You would have been quite sure that no one could go down inside without being trampled to death. But the deer people are a gentle people. More than once Tuktu or Aklak, wishing to be on the other side of the corral, walked right through

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the herd, the deer making way for them as they walked.

Perhaps you can guess how eagerly Tuktu watched to see if Speedfoot, that deer of her father's, which she was sure the Good Spirit had chosen, would appear in the herd. She was sure he wouldn't, but there would be no convincing Aklak until the last deer had passed through the chute. Aklak was so busy helping in the marking of the unmarked deer, that he could not watch all the deer that passed through, but you may be sure he kept as good a watch as he could.

At last, the round-up was over. All the fawns had been ear-marked. Each owner had counted his deer and knew just how much his herd had increased. As soon as there was a chance, Tuktu whispered in Aklak's ear, "I told you that Speedfoot was not in the herd. Wait now until the herd moves up to the Valley of the Good Spirit, and you will find him there."

Of course Kutok had been watching for that particular deer. It had been the pride of his heart the year before, and its disappearance had worried him. He had thought that some-

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how it might have been overlooked on the winter grazing grounds, but when the round-up was over, he knew that the animal was not in the herd. Then he was torn between fear and hope. His fear was that the animal had strayed from the herd and been killed by wolves. His hope was—I do not have to tell you what his hope was. It was that this summer they would find Speedfoot bearing the ear-marks of the Good Spirit. To Kutok and to Aklak it was merely a hope, but to Tuktu it was a certainty. She hadn't the least shadow of doubt, and her heart sang for joy.

CHAPTER XIX

THE CHRISTMAS STORY

THAT was a never to be forgotten summer to Tuktu and Aklak. A ship came in the harbor near which they were camped, and they had a chance to see how the white men lived on the ship and all the wonders that the ship contained. One of the white men spent much time at their camp asking through one of the herders, who could speak his language, all sorts of questions, questions that made Tuktu and Aklak think that he knew very little. But then when they in their turn began asking questions, he told them such wonderful things that they began to think that they knew very little.

One day as he sat watching Tuktu and her mother, Navaluk, making a coat—with a hood attached, trimmed with a fringe of wolverine fur around the edge—he told them stories, and the story that he told of Christ-

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mas was the story that Tuktu liked best of all. She told it to Aklak.

"What do you think, Aklak?" she said. "The children outside of our beautiful Northland have no reindeer. Most of them have never seen a reindeer."

"What drags their sleds then, dogs?" demanded the practical Aklak.

"No," replied Tuktu, "they have other animals called horses. But they cannot be beautiful like our deer, for they have no antlers. But all those children have heard of our reindeer, Aklak, and there is a certain time in the winter called Christmas when in the night after every one is asleep, there comes the children's saint and visits each home. And, Aklak, he comes with reindeer!"

Aklak looked up quickly. "The Good Spirit?" he cried.

Tuktu's eyes were shining as she nodded. "It must be," she said, "for who else would have reindeer? And, listen, Aklak: he is short and round and shakes when he laughs; and he has a white beard and a fur-trimmed coat and a fur-trimmed hat; and his reindeer take him right up on the roofs of the

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houses; and then he takes a pack on his back and goes right down the chimney; and he leaves gifts for little children while they are asleep. And if any little boy or little girl lies awake and peeps and tries to see him, he doesn't leave any presents for that little girl or that little boy and they never do see him. When he has made his visit, he goes right up the chimney again and jumps in his sleigh and calls to his reindeer and away he goes to the next stopping place. And he makes all those visits in one night. No wonder he wants reindeer. No wonder he wants the very best reindeer."

"But if no one ever sees him, how do they know what he looks like?" demanded practical Aklak.

"Oh," replied Tuktu, "it is only on the night before Christmas that he never is seen. I mean he is never seen coming down the chimney and putting the gifts for the children where they will find them. But he is seen often going about before Christmas, for he has to find out who have been good, that they may receive presents. And the children give him letters and tell him what they want, and

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if they have been good, he tries to give them what they want. So he leaves the Northland early, some time before Christmas, and goes out into the Great World. Then he returns for the gifts and the night before Christmas makes that wonderful flying trip with the deer. He loves reindeer."

"Of course he loves the reindeer!" Aklak interrupted. "How could he help loving the reindeer? Aren't they the most important animals in all the Great World?"

"That is what I said, but the man said that horses are more important down there. I asked him if they ate the meat of the horses and he said no. And I asked him if they made clothing from the skins of the horses and he said no. He said they were important because they worked for men."

Aklak shrugged his shoulders. "The reindeer work for men also. They carry us where we want to go. We do not have to carry food for them, for they find it for themselves. They furnish us with food and clothing and our tents. I would not for the world live down there where there are no reindeer. Did the man tell you anything else?"

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Tuktu's eyes were like stars. "Yes," said she. "He said that all over that land at Christmas time they have beautiful green trees covered with lights at night and many shining things. And sometimes these trees are hung with presents for the boys and girls; and sometimes the Good Saint appears at one of these trees and with his own hands gives the gifts to the children. But the very day after Christmas he disappears and he is seen no more until the Christmas season comes again; and no one knows where he is. All the children wonder and wonder where he is all through the year, but they have never been able to find out."

"Did you tell the man that we know?" Aklak asked.

Tuktu shook her head. "He wouldn't believe," said she. "But we do know, Aklak, for that children's saint is the Good Spirit who lives in the Valley of the Good Spirit. Oh, Aklak, wouldn't it be too wonderful if he would choose our deer for that marvelous Christmas journey?"

CHAPTER XX

THE GREAT TEMPTATION

TUKTU and Aklak loved the summer by the shore. Yet both were impatient for the coming of the time when the herds would move up to the Valley of the Good Spirit. The eight deer Aklak had so carefully trained had been grazing with the herd all summer. The two children had kept their secret well, but, oh, how eager they were to see if the Good Spirit would choose any of their deer!

At last the big herd moved and as before Kutok took the two children with him to watch that the deer should not leave the valley without knowledge of the herders. When they got there, they found grazing near the camp Speedfoot, the missing deer, which Tuktuk had seen chosen in the Valley of the Good Spirit. Looking at the ears, they found Kutok's mark, but also a new mark, the mark of the Good Spirit, for it was unlike any other

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mark in all that region. This splendid deer and seven others were grazing near the hut, and Kutok and Aklak promptly fastened them, that they might not go back with the herd. For were not these the blessed deer?

But the herd moved on. Looking over toward the hills around the valley, the children could see the grazing deer in the distance, but they were too far away to tell one deer from another.

This year Aklak spent less time hunting than he had the previous year. He could think of nothing but those eight deer. "If the Good Spirit chooses all of them, how wonderful it would be! I do hope he will," said he.

Tuktu hoped so, too, but she didn't say so. She merely reminded Aklak that only one of his father's deer had been chosen the year before.

As the days slipped by, Aklak was less and less certain that his deer would be chosen. Finally, he confessed to Tuktu that if the Good Spirit would just take one, he would be satisfied.

"He will. I know he will," replied Tuktu.

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One morning when their father was off hunting, Aklak proposed that they take the two pack-deer and go over to the edge of the Valley of the Good Spirit, where they could look down into it. Tuktu shook her head and there was a startled look in her big eyes. "Oh, no, Aklak," she cried, "we mustn't do that!"

"Why not?" demanded Aklak. "You went down into the valley last year. Why should you be afraid to do it again?"

"But I didn't go of my own will," cried Tuktu. "I was taken there without knowing I was going, and that is very different. I think the Good Spirit knew and meant for me to come."

"Well, anyway," said Aklak, "let's go up on the hills where we can look down on the curtain of beautiful mist. That will do no harm. Besides, I want to see if those deer I trained are all right."

But Tuktu would not be moved. "Do you remember the story the white man told, and that I told you?" she demanded.

Aklak nodded. "What of it?" said he.

"Do you not remember that the children

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who peek, not only never see the good saint when he visits them at Christmas, but get no gifts?"

Aklak hung his head. "Yes," he admitted, "I remember. But this is different."

"No," said Tuktu, "it is not different. Have we not always been told that the deer people only may visit the Valley of the Good Spirit? If we should anger the Good Spirit, our deer would not be chosen."

"Perhaps they won't be anyway," declared Aklak.

"Perhaps they won't," agreed Tuktu, "but I know the Good Spirit will know that we trained them for him. And even if he does not choose them for his Christmas journey, I think he will be pleased. Aklak, we mustn't do anything so dreadful as even to seem to be spying on the Good Spirit. If he wants us to visit him, I am sure he will let us know in some way."

Aklak looked over toward the specks dotting the distant hillside, the deer feeding above Kringle Valley. He sighed. "Of course you are right, Tuktu," said he, but, oh dear, I should so like to look down in that

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valley." His face brightened suddenly. "Perhaps we will have a fog," he exclaimed. "If we have a fog, we will just get on the two pack-deer and perhaps they'll take us in there. I'll ride Whitefoot, because he has been there before."

"We won't do anything of the kind," replied Tuktu decidedly. "That would be just as bad as going right up in there ourselves. Aklak, I feel it in my bones that the Good Spirit is going to choose some of our deer. So, let's forget all about wanting to see into that valley."

CHAPTER XXI

ATTACKED BY WOLVES

SUMMER this year was shorter than usual. As if they knew that the winter would come early and be long and hard, the deer left the Valley of the Good Spirit earlier than ever before, and began the slow journey back toward the winter grazing grounds. At the first movement of the herds, Aklak and Tuktu had been sent back to the main camp to help break camp and move to their winter home. So it was not until the deer were back on the home pastures that they had an opportunity to look for the deer Aklak had so carefully trained.

An unusually bold family of wolves had attacked the herd on the way. There are no more cunning people in all the great world than the wolves. For days they had followed the deer without once being discovered by either the deer or the herders. Perhaps the

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latter had grown careless. Perhaps they had allowed the deer to scatter too widely. Anyway, the attack came when there were no herders near enough to interfere.

A wary, clever old mother was the leader of those wolves. She knew deer as not even the herders knew them. She knew just how to cut out a small band of animals from the main herd and drive them into the hills to be killed at leisure. She knew how to do it without stampeding the rest of the herd, and she and her well-grown children did it. It wasn't until one of the herders found their tracks in newly-fallen snow that the presence of the wolves was suspected. Then it didn't take long to discover what had happened.

Two of the herders, who were also noted hunters, set out on the trail of the wolves to make sure that the band was not still hanging around. They also hoped that they might find some of the missing deer.

But those deer had been run hard and fast and all the hunters found were the cleanly picked bones of several. The others had been so scattered that it was useless to try to round them up.

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There was no way of knowing whose deer the wolves had killed until the winter round-up. Then when the count was made, it would be discovered whose deer were missing. But it was a long time to wait for that winter round-up, so Tuktu and Aklak spent much time going about in the herd looking for those trained deer. And they were not the only ones who were looking. Kutok, their father, had been very proud of those deer, and as soon as the herd was back on the home pastures, he asked Aklak where they were. Of course Aklak had to tell him that he hadn't seen them.

Now trained sled-deer are valuable animals, and Kutok at once called the other herders to him and told them to watch out for these particular deer. He remembered the attack of the wolves and he feared greatly that the eight sled-deer might have been the victims. This was the same fear that was tugging at the hearts of Aklak and Tuktu. There was no way for them to know whether the Good Spirit had chosen those deer, or whether the wolves had killed them. There could be no way of knowing until the return

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of the herds to the seashore in the early summer. Meanwhile, Aklak was busy training more deer, and one of these was Little Spot. He was still young for sled work, but he was such a splendid young deer, so big and so strong and so willing, that everybody who saw him said that in time he would make the finest sled-deer in all the Northland.

Of course, Tuktu and Aklak said nothing to their father of their hope that the Good Spirit had chosen those deer. They suspected that should they tell, they would be laughed at. Also, they were afraid their father would not like it that they should have dared to think that they could train deer for the Good Spirit. So, when the round-up came and none of the deer were found, but it was discovered that several others of Kutok's deer were also missing, they pretended to think as did all the other folk, that Kutok had been unfortunate and that the wolves had gotten his deer. This was what every one believed and it was repeated so often that Tuktu and Aklak found it difficult at times not to believe that it was true. "Had it not been for those wolves, we

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should know," Tuktu kept saying over and over. "I hate those wolves! I do so!"

Kutok also hated the wolves. He hated them for the same reason that Tuktu did, and he hated them because he knew that if those deer were not safe in the Valley of the Good Spirit, they most certainly had been eaten by this time and all his hard work had gone for nothing. So it was that the wolves brought worry to the home of Kutok.

CHAPTER XXII

THE CHRISTMAS INVITATION

IT HAD been known to the village since the forming of new ice that the ship which they had visited in summer had not left for the far-away country from which it had come, but was now frozen in the ice and would



spend the winter in the Far Northland. So there was no surprise when one day there arrived two white men and an Eskimo guide, who had journeyed overland by dog sledge. One of these men was the one who had told

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Tuktu the story of Christmas. As Kutok's house was the largest and the best house in the village, the visitors were entertained there.

They remained two or three days and when they left to return to their ship, all the village turned out to see them go. They had brought things to trade and in return for deer meat and warm clothing of deerskin had left things which were of equal value to the Eskimos. And they had left the feeling of goodwill, for in all their trading they had taken the greatest care to be fair. When they left they had taken with them a promise that those of the men who could be spared from their duties in watching the deer, together with some of the women and children from the village, would visit the ship at a certain time, which the white men called Christmas. There would be much feasting and merrymaking and strange things to see on the ship.

The white man who had made friends with Tuktu had made Kutok promise that Tuktu should come. And this her father had been the more willing to grant, because he had been given a knife he had long wanted. So it was arranged that unless the weather should

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be too bad, so there could be no traveling, Ikok, Navaluk, and the two children, and perhaps some others of the village, should pay a Christmas visit to the ship.

Tuktu and Aklak could think of and talk about little else. Aklak saw to it that the sled-deer were in the best possible condition. It would take them at least two days and one sleep. That sleep would be at the herder's hut near Kringle Valley. At least, that is the way that Kutok planned to go. There was a longer way around by way of another village and this would be the way that others from the village would go.

Kutok and Aklak went to work on the sleds. They must be put in the best condition for such a long journey. They would take six, one for each of them and two extra to carry provisions and things for trade. It would not be necessary to have extra drivers, for often one driver handles at least three sleds. He rides on the first one, the deer drawing the second one is attached to the rear of his sled, and to the rear of that sled is attached the third deer. So, it would be a simple matter to look out for the extra sleds on this journey.

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Kutok was to drive Speedfoot; Tuktu would drive Big Spot; Aklak would drive Little Spot; and Navaluk would drive Whitefoot.

While her father and brother were busy going over the sleds and seeing to it that they were in perfect order, Tuktu and her mother were equally busy. They had promised two pairs of boots and two new suits, for which they had taken the measurements when their visitors were with them, and there would be none too much time to get them ready. As she worked, Tuktu kept thinking of all that she had heard from the white man about Christmas. This would be her first Christmas and she wondered if she would see the wonderful Santa Claus. Then she remembered that he would be on his journey around the great world. Besides, had not she been told that those who peeked never saw him? But, despite this, right down in her heart, she couldn't help hoping that she might get just a glimpse of him. She did want to see if this Santa of the white man was in very truth the Good Spirit whom she had seen in Kringle Valley.

The cold grew stronger. The Northern

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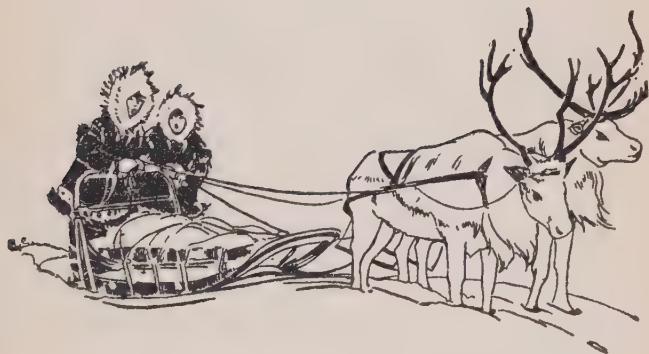
Lights flashed, and the stars seemed so close that one could almost pick them from the sky. It was a world of white, but the snow was not so deep but that the deer could easily paw down through it and get their food. It was just right for good sledding and as the time for the start approached, Tuktu and Aklak watched anxiously lest a fierce northern blizzard should sweep down and delay their journey.

But the blizzard did not come, and at last they were ready to start. Each wore two suits. The inner one was worn with the fur turned in and the outer one with the fur out. The inner hood was trimmed with wolverine fur, because frost does not cling to this fur. With any other fur, the moisture from the breath would freeze and soon make a ring of ice around the face.

The outer hood was trimmed with wolf-skin, the long hair of which would protect the face from the bitter wind. With their bear-skin trousers and their double boots, they had nothing to fear from the cold. So with Kutok leading, with a deer and one of the luggage

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sleds following, Aklak next with the second extra deer and sled behind him, Navaluk next, and Tuktu at the end, the little procession started for their Christmas outing.



CHAPTER XXIII

THE CHRISTMAS VISION

IT WAS late when Kutok and his family reached the camp near the Valley of the Good Spirit. It had been a wonderful journey. The snow had been just right and the reindeer had traveled steadily and fast, for they were in splendid condition. Now they were fastened out, each tied by a long line to a hummock under the snow. There was plenty of food here and the deer at once began to paw down to get it. It is one of the advantages in traveling with reindeer that their food does not have to be carried for them. They will get their own food at the end of the day's trip.

Kutok and Navaluk had no thought for anything but rest after the evening meal. But not so the two children. They could not forget that they were in sight of the hills around the Valley of the Good Spirit and that it

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might be that over there in that Valley were the eight missing deer. So, when their father and mother were asleep, they slipped out from the hut for a look over toward the wonderful valley, for was it not from that valley that the marvelous Northern Lights flashed up through the sky?

There was no wind. The cold was intense. But Tuktu and Aklak were dressed for it and they minded it not at all. It seemed as if the stars were so close that they could be reached. It was not moonlight, for this was the period when the moon was not visible. But the starlight almost made up for it.

And then as they stood there, looking over toward the Valley of the Good Spirit, a long streamer of light suddenly flashed out, and up, up, up, until it was quite overhead. It quivered, almost died down, then shot up again! Then came another and another and another. The Northern Lights—the Merry Dancers of the Sky—dimmed the stars and made the night almost as light as day. At first, these Northern Lights were simply white; and then they were shot with yellow and red.

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All their lives Tuktu and Aklak had been familiar with these fires of the sky, but never had they seen them as they now saw them. They caught their breath and held to each other with a little bit of fear. Those fires were no longer mere flashing white, shimmering, dancing streamers of light. They were yellow and red in many shades, and they appeared, as if in very truth they were fires leaping high up in the sky. And as they had so often heard it said, those dancing, leaping lights were coming out of the Valley of the Good Spirit. Certainly, they were flashing from directly behind the hills that shut away that valley, so of course they must be coming from the valley.

The lights died down. For a few moments there was no light save from the stars. Then from directly over the Valley of the Good Spirit a long streamer of white flickering light crept up and up, and as it crept, it broadened until it was like a broad path across the sky toward the south. There was the tinkle of silver bells. Tuktu touched Aklak. "See, Aklak! See the deer!" she whispered.

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But Aklak had already seen them. On that broad shining path a pair of reindeer had appeared. He knew them instantly. They were two of the deer he had trained, and which had disappeared. Out of the shimmering light behind them moved two more. And these he recognized. There could be no doubt. He would have known them among ten thousand deer. They were harnessed two and two, and as they moved forward, another pair appeared, and then another.

Clinging together, breathless, round-eyed, Aklak and Tuktu stared. Eight deer they counted—eight deer harnessed two and two. Would there be more? The curtain of light low above the hilltop seemed to burst in a glory of color such as made what they had seen before seem as nothing. And out of the midst of that glory, drawn by the eight deer, came a sled. On it Tuktu recognized instantly Santa Claus, the Good Spirit, whom she had seen in the Valley.

He was short and jolly and round and fat,
With a fur-trimmed coat and a fur-trimmed hat.
He laughed "Ha! Ha!" and he laughed "Ho!
Ho!"

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"Hello, Little Folk," he cried, "Hello!
The boys and girls of the world this year
Will see for themselves my splendid deer;
Will see and love them and surely know
That the reindeer come, though there be no snow.
For they're magic deer for my magic sleigh,
And we circle the world in a single day.
There is naught so faithful and naught so quick
To carry the message of Old St. Nick.
By training my steeds you have saved for me
Some weeks of labor; and so you see
It happens I'm able to start this year
In time for the children to see the deer.
And all who see them I tell you true
A Christmas greeting will send to you.

"As you will have given joy to all the little folk of the Great World this year, in like degree will your own Christmas be merry, and will happiness fill your hearts. And now, my dears, I must away."

Santa waved a mittened hand to them, then turned to his deer and cried:

"'Now, Dasher! Now, Dancer! Now Prancer
and Vixen!
On, Comet! On, Cupid! On, Donner and
Blitzen!'"

Down a shining path of light, across the sky toward the south, the eight deer dashed, until in a breath they were mere specks. Up

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from the valley the orange and red lights streamed higher and higher, until all the sky was a blaze of beautiful light. When they died down, only the stars were to be seen, twinkling so close that it seemed as if they might be picked from the sky.

With shining eyes Tuktu and Aklak returned to the hut. "No one will believe us if we tell it," whispered Tuktu. "They'll say we dreamed it. We'll wait, Aklak, until the blessed deer are returned to us by the Good Spirit next summer, and we can show his earmark. Then all will know that we speak truly."

Thus it was that it was made possible for the boys and girls of the Great World to really see Santa Claus and his blessed reindeer. And thus it was that Tuktu and Aklak found happiness and great content, and the real joy of the blessed Christmas Spirit.



The Christmas Reindeer



Thornton W. Burgess